DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 356 019 JC 930 207

TITLE Cohort92 Entering Student Survey: Preliminary Findings. Enrollment Analysis EA93-7.
INSTITUTION Prince George's Community Coll., Largo, MD. Office of Institutional Research and Analysis.
PUB DATE May 93
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Freshmen; Community Colleges; *Educational Background; Grades (Scholastic); Income; *Parent Background; Questionnaires; School Surveys; *Socioeconomic Background; *Student Characteristics; *Student Educational Objectives; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS Prince Georges Community College MD

ABSTRACT

In October 1992, Prince George's Community College (PGCC) in Largo, Maryland, undertook a study of the characteristics of first-time students to gather information for the college's recruitment and assessment efforts. A four-page questionnaire was mailed to all 2,730 first-time students enrolled in fall 1992, requesting information on the students' academic goals, socio-economic status, and academic/socio-cultural background. A total of 949 completed questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 35%. Preliminary findings of the survey included the following: (1) 51% of the respondents indicated that they planned to earn an Associate degree from PGCC, while 34% said they planned to take courses for transfer without earning a degree; (2) at the time of the survey, 53% of the respondents lived with one or both of their parents, 19% lived with a spouse, and 7% lived alone; (3) 45% were employed full-time, 26% were employed 10 to 29 hours per week, and 27% were unemployed; (4) half of the respondents reported household incomes below $40,000, compared to a Prince George's County median of $43,000; (5) with regard to respondents' high schools, 51% graduated from a public high school in Prince George's County, 51% reported spending 3 hours or less on homework, and 64% reported getting mostly "B's" and "C's"; and (6) 17% of the respondents' mothers and 16% of their fathers had earned a two- or four-year college degree, while 16% of mothers and 20% of fathers had not earned a high school diploma. Data tables and the survey instrument are included. (BCY)

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cohort92

Entering Student Survey

Preliminary Findings

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Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

Enrollment Analysis EA93-7
May 1993

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PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Office of Institutional Research and Analysis

COHORT92 ENTERING STUDENT SURVEY: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Enrollment Analysis EA93-7
May 1993

Introduction

To inform both recruiting efforts and assessment studies, the research office has perceived a need for more background information about the College's students. A survey was designed during the summer of 1992 to collect some of desired data from the following fall's entering class of first-time students. This report of preliminary findings from the survey was prepared to meet the immediate needs of the team planning the College's recruiting strategies for the next three years.

Methodology

A four-page questionnaire was mailed in October 1992 to all 2,730 first-time students enrolled in Fall 1992. Students enrolling in the preceding summer sessions and continuing in the fall were included. A second mailing went out the first week in November. The postal service returned 46 survey packets as undeliverable. By the time analysis commenced, 949 completed questionnaires had been returned. Adjusting for the undeliverables, the overall response rate was 35 percent.

The respondents differed as a group from the entire population of entering students on several demographic variables. Women constituted 57 percent of the entering students but accounted for 67 percent of the respondents. Racial groups responded differentially, with whites overrepresented (38 percent of the respondents compared to 31 percent of the entrants) and blacks underrepresented (51 to 59 percent). Older students were more likely to respond than younger students; for example, students under age 20 constituted 54 percent of the population surveyed but only 47 percent of the respondents. Because of the overrepresentation of older students among the respondents, the respondents were also somewhat more likely than the total entrant group to be part-time, attending extension locations, enrolled in evening classes, and enrolled for reasons other than preparing for transfer. Because of these differences, the total respondent frequencies reported in this report must be interpreted with caution. Since the respondents were not a mirror image of the total group of entering students, the percentages reported below truly describe only the students who responded. For a number of questionnaire items, crosstabulations with the demographic variables were run and where large differences were found, they are reported. In future studies, these data may be weighted to statistically adjust for the response differentials by demographic groupings. All of the percentages reported in this initial, preliminary report are based on the unweighted responses and reflect actual respondent proportions for each item.

Goals and Plans

Half of the respondents said they intended to earn an Associate degree from PGCC. A third indicated they planned to take courses for transfer but did not plan on earning an award from the College. Twelve percent had no credential in mind, with the remaining three percent pursuing a certificate from PGCC:

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO AT PGCC?	
Earn an Associate degree from PGCC	51%
Take courses for transfer without earning a PGCC award	34
Take courses/not working toward a degree or certificate	12
Earn a one-year certificate from PGCC	3

When asked why they were taking classes at PGCC, two-fifths of the respondents said they were preparing to transfer to a four-year college. A fifth were preparing for a career or job change. Eleven percent were preparing for a first job or career; a similar percentage was attending to update skills for a current job. Eight percent stated that they were exploring their options, trying to decide what they wanted to do. Other reasons were cited by less than five percent of the respondents:

WHY ARE YOU TAKING CLASSES AT PGCC?	
Prepare for transfer to a four-year college	42%
Prepare for a career or job change	22
Prepare for first job or career	11
Update skills for current job/qualify for promotion	11
Explore options, decide what I want to do	8
Help me start or manage my own business	3
Learn for its own sake, know more about the world	2
Learn more about a hobby or personal interest	1
Family/friends expected me to attend college	<1

The typical graduate takes more than four years to earn a "two-year" Associate degree. Most students who transfer will do so before earning a degree from PGCC. How long

do entering students anticipate going to the community college? Slightly over half say they plan to attend PGCC for two years. Over a fifth expect they will be here longer. The rest anticipate shorter stays, including 7 percent who expect to attend only one term:

HOW LONG DO YOU PLAN TO ATTEND PGCC?	
Two years (through Spring 1994)	53%
Three to four years	20
One year (through Spring 1993)	17
One semester (Fall 1992 only)	7
Five years or more	3

Students are asked to identify the curriculum they plan to study at the College on their application. The College uses this identified major field in enrollment analysis and reporting to the state. How sure of their choices are new students just beginning their college careers? Sixty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they were definitely committed or at least fairly sure of their curriculum choice. Over a quarter, however, expressed less certainty about their choice or stated that they were undecided:

HOW SURE ARE YOU OF YOUR CHOICE OF MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY?	
Definitely committed to my PGCC program choice	34%
Fairly sure it's the right field for me	31
I am undecided about/have not chosen a curriculum	15
Unsure of my choice, likely to change my mind	12
Taking courses only/not interested in a degree program	8

Current Socio-economic Status

The survey included several items exploring the students socio-economic status, both currently and when they were growing up. In this section, the respondents' current situations are described.

At the time of the survey, slightly over half of the students lived with one or both of their parents. A fifth lived with their spouse, with or without children. Approximately one in 15 students either lived alone, with one or more children but with no spouse or partner at

home, or with unrelated housemates. Nine percent had other household arrangements, such as living with relatives other than their parents, spouses, or children:

WHICH STATEMENT DESCRIBES YOUR LIVING ARRANGEMENT NOW?	
I live with both parents	32%
I live with one parent	21
I live with my spouse (with or without children)	19
I live alone	7
I live with my child(ren)--no spouse/partner present	6
I live with person(s) not related to me	6
Other	9

Twenty-seven percent of the respondents had children under their care. Half of these were responsible for one child, a third had two children, with the remainder caring for three or more.

Forty-five percent of the respondents were employed full-time when surveyed. Twenty-eight percent held part-time jobs. Fully a fifth were unemployed and seeking a job:

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS?	
Employed full-time (30 or more hours per week)	45%
Employed 10 to 29 hours per week	26
Unemployed but seeking a job	20
Unemployed, not seeking a job (incl. homemaker, retired)	7
Employed less than 10 hours per week	2

Half of the respondents reported household incomes below $40,000, compared to a Prince George's County median of $43,000. The reported incomes encompassed a wide range, with five percent claiming incomes below $5,000 annually and three percent claiming incomes of at least $100,000. A majority fell into the middle income categories, with annual household incomes between $30,000 and $75,000. The most affluent respondents were those living with both natural parents. The least affluent were those living with their children with no spouse or partner present, those living with person(s) not related to them, and those living alone.

WHAT IS YOUR TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME?	
Less than $5,000	5%
$ 5,000 - 9,999	3
$10,000 - 19,999	12
$20,000 - 29,999	17
$30,000 - 39,999	16
$40,000 - 49,999	14
$50,000 - 74,999	22
$75,000 - 99,999	7
$100,000 and above	3

Academic Background

About one fourth of the students who graduate from Prince George's County public high schools will attend PGCC within ten years of their graduation. The College is the most popular entry point into higher education for County residents. Yet nearly half of the respondents were not County high school graduates, and fully 62 percent had attended other school systems in grades K-8:

WHERE DID YOU GO TO ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL?		
	Grade K-8	High School
Prince George's County public schools	38%	51%
Other public schools (non PG/DC)	25	23
Private schools	16	11
Washington, D.C. public schools	9	7
Combination/other schooling	12	7

Half of the respondents reported spending three hours or less a week on homework when they were in high school. Four percent claimed to study more than 15 hours a week. Students from private high schools reported spending more time on homework than those who had attended public schools. Forty percent of the private school graduates reported

spending at least 7 hours a week on homework, compared to less than 16 percent of the Prince George's County public high school graduates.

HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH WEEK?	
None	2%
1 hour or less (per week)	14
2 to 3 hours	35
4 to 6 hours	28
7 to 15 hours	18
More than 15 hours	4

Most respondents reported getting B's and C's in high school. Thirty percent claimed to have been A and B students in high school. Only seven percent admitted to receiving mostly C's and D's or lower:

WHAT GRADES DID YOU GET IN HIGH SCHOOL?	
Mostly A's	5%
A's and B's	25
Mostly B's	16
B's and C's	35
Mostly C's	13
C's and D's	6
Mostly D's or lower	1

Recent national studies have suggested that mathematics achievement in high school is a significant predictor of college attendance and success. Placement test results at the College indicate that mathematics is the skill area entering students are most likely to be deficient in. For example, three-fifths of the Fall 1992 entrants tested in mathematics earned scores indicating a need for developmental mathematics. Demographic groups most in need of remedial math work included African Americans (71 percent needing) and women (65 percent). Students of all ages were found to need mathematics assistance; indeed, the need increased with age. In some cases, the skill deficit was severe. In recent years, as many as a fourth of those needing developmental mathematics are placed in basic arithmetic.

The survey asked respondents to indicate the math courses they had passed in high school. A fifth had not completed any algebra course. At the opposite extreme, 11 percent had had some calculus:

WHAT IS THE HIGHEST MATH COURSE YOU PASSED IN HIGH SCHOOL?	
General mathematics	11%
Consumer mathematics	1
Business mathematics	8
Algebra I	17
Geometry	14
Algebra II	22
Trigonometry	16
Pre-calculus/elementary analysis	8
Calculus	3

A final indicator of academic background included in the survey was an associational one. Students were asked what proportion of their friends went to college immediately after high school. Less than a third of the respondents reported that all or almost all of their friends had gone to college. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that less than half had done so. Fifteen percent said that few or none of their friends had gone to college:

WHAT PROPORTION OF FRIENDS WENT DIRECTLY TO COLLEGE?	
None/few	15%
Some, but less than half	32
One half or more	25
All/almost all	28

Socio-cultural Background

The survey included a number of questions concerning the students' lives while they were growing up. The purpose of these items was to gain a greater understanding of who our students are, and, in later studies, to explore whether these background characteristics are related to student achievement at the College.

English was the first language learned by 88 percent of the respondents. Nearly four percent were raised in Spanish-speaking homes. The remaining eight percent first learned to speak a language other than English or Spanish. Thirty-eight other languages were identified. Fourteen respondents specified native African languages, such as Amharic and Yoruba. Twelve cited Tagalog or other Filipino languages. French was the first language of 11 respondents. Indian languages such as Gujarati were the native languages of eight respondents. Other languages cited by multiple respondents included Korean, Chinese, Urdu, Italian, and Vietnamese.

Three-fifths of the respondents lived with both natural parents when they were growing up. Thirty percent lived with one parent.

WHICH STATEMENT DESCRIBES YOUR LIVING ARRANGEMENT GROWING UP?	
I lived with both natural parents	61%
I lived with one of my parents	30
I lived with other relatives (aunt, grandparents, etc.)	5
I lived with foster parent(s)/guardian(s)	1
Other	3

Majorities of both the mothers and the fathers of the respondents had never attended college. Indeed, for two-fifths of the respondents, neither parent had attended college. Thus two in five were first-generation college students. At the opposite extreme, 15 percent of the respondents had at least one parent with a graduate or professional degree.

WHAT IS THE HIGHEST EDUCATION YOUR PARENTS ATTAINED?		
	Mother	Father
Less than high school diploma	16%	20%
High school graduate	39	34
Some college attendance	21	18
Two-year college degree	8	6
Four-year college degree	9	10
Graduate or professional degree	8	13

Respondents were asked to indicate the occupations of their mother and father. Respondents reported a wide range of jobs for both mothers and fathers:

WHAT TYPE OF WORK DO YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER DO?		
	Mother	Father
Executive/administrative/managerial	8%	12%
Professional specialty occupations	4	11
Service worker	11	7
Mid-level government worker	7	6
Machinist/mechanic	2	6
Small business owner	2	6
Carpenter/electrician/plumber/HVAC	<1	6
Construction worker/laborer	<1	6
Truck/bus/taxi driver	0	6
Military service	<1	5
Administrative support/clerical	10	4
Technicians, including health	4	3
Cashier/salesperson	5	2
Schoolteacher/admin./counselor	5	2
Farmers/forestry worker	1	2
Homemaker (full-time)	13	<1
Secretary/administrative assistant	10	<1
Nurse	8	<1
Other blue collar occupations	5	6
Other white collar occupations	2	3

Among the professional specialty occupations, engineers and computer analysts were most prevalent. Custodians, janitors, child care workers, security guards, and food service workers were most common among the service occupations. Engineering technicians, drafters, and radiographers were the most often cited technician-level occupations. Thirteen percent of the respondents reported that their mothers were full-time homemakers.

To add to our knowledge of student backgrounds, the survey included a series of behavioral questions relating to the respondents' lives while they were growing up. Respondents were asked to indicate whether a statement was very true, somewhat true, or not true about them when they were growing up.

HOW TRUE IS EACH STATEMENT ABOUT YOU WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?			
	Very True	Somewhat True	Not True
I had regular chores to do	67%	26%	8%
My parents made sure I did homework	59	34	7
I had a quiet place to study at home	39	48	14
My home was filled with books	38	48	14
I could watch as much TV as I wanted	27	40	33
I was read to a lot as a child	26	46	28
Good time more important than grades	20	44	36
Family never expected me to go to college	10	21	69
I could stay out as late as I wanted	8	22	70

All of these family and home characteristics were related, at least moderately, and in the expected way, to the respondents' self-reported high school grades. For example, respondents indicating their home was filled with books and that they were read to a lot as a child reported better grades in high school than those from less literary homes. Similarly, respondents who said that their television viewing was restricted and who had a quiet place to study also claimed higher grades in school. It remains to be investigated whether these characteristics will be associated with achievements at the community college.

Summary

This preliminary analysis of the survey of Fall 1992 entering students has reported the simple percentage frequency distributions for each questionnaire item. The responses were not weighted to more accurately reflect the total entering student population but instead reflect the answers of the 949 students who responded. With only a few exceptions, this report has focused on the responses of the entire respondent group, rather than an analysis by student subgroups. The latter may be more valuable when targeted marketing applications of these data are desired.

This is the initial report on *COHORT92*, students entering PGCC in Fall 1992. The survey population included students entering in the prior summer sessions, students who will be excluded in subsequent tracking of this entering cohort. For longitudinal outcomes analysis, it is preferable to have a group starting their college careers at the same point in time. The 181 students entering during the summer were included in this study to increase the sizes of the survey population and resulting respondent group, the latter facilitating subgroup analysis which is often plagued by small cell size problems.

The research office now has three fall entering cohorts that are being tracked over time to analyze student outcomes. Reports of the progress of the first cohort, students entering in Fall 1990, have been featured in the College's official *Annual Assessment Reports* to the Commission. Because of a desire to assess the impact of instructional support services, a second cohort (students entering in Fall 1991) was established. Finally, this new cohort file has been established to add background variables to the analysis. A side benefit of tracking multiple cohorts is that the experiences of each can be compared, to both confirm basic findings and detect trends as they emerge.

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Director
Institutional Research and Analysis

Kay R. McCoy
Supervisor of Institutional Research

PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ENTERING STUDENT SURVEY - FALL 1992

Please respond by circling the number preceding the statement most true of you. In most cases, circle only one number for each question. If more than one applies, circle the one that fits best.

A. What do you plan to do at PGCC?

1. Take courses without working toward a degree or certificate
2. Take courses, then transfer to a four-year college (without earning an award from PGCC)
3. Earn a (one year) certificate from PGCC
4. Earn a (two-year) A.A. degree from PGCC

B. Why are you taking classes at PGCC?

1. Explore options, decide what I want to do
2. Prepare for first job or career
3. Update skills for current job/qualify for promotion
4. Prepare for a career or job change
5. Help me start or manage my own business
6. Prepare for transfer to a four-year college
7. Learn for its own sake, know more about the world
8. Learn more about a hobby or personal interest
9. Family/friends expected me to attend college

C. How long do you plan to attend PGCC?

1. One semester
2. One year (through Spring 1993)
3. Two years (through Spring 1994)
4. Three to four years
5. Five years or more

D. How sure are you of your choice of major field of study?

1. Definitely committed to my PGCC program choice
2. Fairly sure it's the right field for me
3. Unsure of my choice, likely to change my mind
4. I am undecided about/have not chosen a curriculum
5. Taking courses only/not interested in a degree

E. What is your current employment status?

1. Employed full-time (30 or more hours per week)
2. Employed 10 to 29 hours per week
3. Employed less than 10 hours per week
4. Unemployed but seeking a job
5. Unemployed, not seeking a job (incl. homemaker, retired)

F. What was the first language you learned to speak?

1. English
2. Spanish
3. Other (please specify):_____

G. How true a description is each of the following statements about you when you were growing up: very true (1), somewhat true (2), not true at all (3)?

	Very True	Somewhat True	Not True
G1. The home I grew up in was filled with books.	1	2	3
G2. My parent(s)/guardian(s) made sure I did my homework.	1	2	3
G3. I had regular chores to do, like taking out the trash.	1	2	3
G4. My family never expected me to go to college.	1	2	3
G5. I was read to a lot as a child.	1	2	3
G6. When I was young I could watch as much TV as I wanted.	1	2	3
G7. For most of my friends a good time was more important than good grades.	1	2	3
G8. I always had a quiet place to study at home.	1	2	3
G9. In high school I could stay out as late as I wanted at night.	1	2	3

H. Please indicate where you went to elementary school (grades K-8) and high school (grades 9-12). If you attended more than one school system at each level, indicate where you attended most:

	Grades K-8	High school
Prince George's County public schools	1	1
Washington, D.C. public schools	2	2
Other public school system	3	3
Private schools	4	4
Combination/other schooling	5	5

I. How much time did you spend on homework each week when you were in high school?

1. None
2. 1 hour or less (per week)
3. 2 to 3 hours
4. 4 to 6 hours
5. 7 to 15 hours
6. More than 15 hours

J. What grades did you get in high school?

1. Mostly A's
2. A's and B's
3. Mostly B's
4. B's and C's
5. Mostly C's
6. C's and D's
7. Mostly D's or lower

K. Which of the following math courses did you take and pass in high school? (circle all that apply)

1. General mathematics
2. Consumer mathematics
3. Business mathematics
4. Algebra I
5. Geometry
6. Algebra II
7. Trigonometry
8. Pre-calculus/elementary analysis
9. Calculus

L. What proportion of your friends went to college directly after high school?

1. None/few
2. Some, but less than half
3. One half or more
4. All/almost all

M. Which statement most closely describes your living arrangement when you were growing up? (If your situation changed, what was the case most of the time?)

1. I lived with both natural parents
2. I lived with one of my parents
3. I lived with other relatives (aunt, grandparents, etc.)
4. I lived with foster parent(s)/guardian(s)
5. Other

N. Which statement describes your living arrangement NOW?

1. I live alone
2. I live with person(s) not related to me
3. I live with my spouse (with or without children)
4. I live with my child(ren) – no spouse/partner present
5. I live with both parents
6. I live with one parent
7. Other

O. How many children live in your household under your care?

(Enter number; if none, enter 0):_____

P. What is the highest grade your parents attained in school?

	Mother	Father
Less than high school degree	1	1
High school graduate	2	2
Some college	3	3
Two-year college degree	4	4
Four-year college degree	5	5
Graduate or professional degree	6	6

Q. What is the approximate total pre-tax income of the people in your household? (Include your parents' or spouse/partner's income if they live with you. Do not include the income of non-family roommates):

1. Less than $5,000
2. $5,000 - 9,999
3. $10,000 - 19,999
4. $20,000 - 29,999
5. $30,000 - 39,999
6. $40,000 - 49,999
7. $50,000 - 74,999
8. $75,000 - 99,999
9. $100,000 and above

R. Please indicate what type of work your mother and father do. If they are deceased or retired, indicate their last occupation. In the last column, indicate what you expect to be doing in 10 years. Circle the number of the closest match, even if it is not exact.

	Mother	Father	You
Accountant	01	01	01
Architect/urban planner	02	02	02
Artist/designer	03	03	03
Automotive mechanic	04	04	04
Bank manager/insurance/real est./broker	05	05	05
Bank teller	06	06	06
Beautician/barber/hairdresser	07	07	07
Bookkeeper/accounting clerk	08	08	08
Business manager/department head	09	09	09
Carpenter/electrician/plumber/HVAC	10	10	10
Cashier/checker/store clerk	11	11	11
Child care/day care worker	12	12	12
Clergy/minister/priest/rabbi	13	13	13
College professor/administrator	14	14	14
Computer operator/technician	15	15	15
Computer programmer/analyst	16	16	16
Construction worker/laborer	17	17	17
Custodian/janitor/domestic worker	18	18	18
Doctor/dentist/veterinarian/psychiatrist	19	19	19
Elected official	20	20	20
Engineer	21	21	21
Engineering technician/drafter	22	22	22
Entertainer/actor/musician	23	23	23
Farmer/rancher/forester/waterman	24	24	24
Government executive/department head	25	25	25
Government worker/mid-level	26	26	26
Groundskeeper/gardener/horticulturist	27	27	27
Health technician/radiographer/therapist	28	28	28
Homemaker (full-time)	29	29	29
Laboratory technician	30	30	30
Lawyer/attorney/judge	31	31	31
Librarian/media specialist	32	32	32
Machinist/equipment oper./factory worker	33	33	33
Military service	34	34	34
Nurse	35	35	35
Office clerk/receptionist/typist	36	36	36
Paralegal/legal secretary	37	37	37
Personnel/labor relations specialist	38	38	38
Police officer/firefighter	39	39	39
Postal worker/parcel delivery/courier	40	40	40
Printer/press operator	41	41	41
Sales representative	42	42	42
Scientist/researcher	43	43	43
Schoolteacher/administrator/counselor	44	44	44
Secretary/administrative assistant	45	45	45
Security guard/correctional officer	46	46	46
Small business owner/manager	47	47	47
Social worker/recreation worker	48	48	48
Truck driver/bus driver/taxi driver	49	49	49
Waiter/restaurant worker	50	50	50
Writer/journalist/editor/publisher	51	51	51
Other white-collar/professional	52	52	52
Other blue-collar requiring training	53	53	53
Other – no training necessary	54	54	54
Unemployed	55	55	55
Don't know	56	56	56

S. In your own words, what do you hope to accomplish by studying at PGCC? That is, what would mean "success" here for you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

T. If you move out of the area, we would like to be able to locate you and learn your opinions about how well Prince George's Community College prepared you for further education and employment, and whether your experiences at PGCC have brought you other continuing personal or professional benefits. Below, please give the name and address of a friend or close relative who will always know your whereabouts so we can properly address future correspondence.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

Thank you! Please mail this survey in the enclosed envelope to Institutional Research, Prince George's Community College, 301 Largo Road, Largo, MD 20772